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Examination of the Records of the Salem Witch Trials

Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal

THE legal records of the 1692 and 1693 witchcraft prosecutions in Massachusetts are central to the historical understanding of those events. A new edition of these records has been in preparation for more than a decade and will soon be in print. *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* is more accurate, more comprehensive, and organized differently from all preceding collections of similar materials, emphasizing the chronological unfolding of the events and the legal procedures involved.¹ Aside from including more records than any previous collection—some newly discovered and some overlooked in previous editions—two features of the entries in this edition are unique: each document has been dated according to when the document was used and content added to it (some have as many as five dates), and each transcription notes where the handwriting in the manuscript changes, with twenty-four of the most prominent recorders identified by name across the entire collection. The discovery and printing of these identities open up worlds, enabling scholars now, for example, to investigate the patterns of participation of various individuals in the proceedings, to explicate the actual legal procedures used, and to articulate the sequence and concurrence of events with a degree of precision previously impossible.

Publications of the legal records in the past have essentially been organized as case-based collections. The first was by Cotton Mather, who transcribed the trial records of five selected cases and published them in *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1692) at the request of Governor William Phips in defense of the actions of the Court of Oyer

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¹ Bernard Rosenthal, Editor; Margo Burns, Project Manager and Associate Editor; Gretchen A. Adams, Peter Grund, Risto Hiltunen, Leena Kahlas-Tarkka, Merja Kytö, Matti Peikola, Benjamin C. Ray, Matti Rissanen, Marilynne K. Roach, and Richard Trask, Associate Editors, *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

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and Terminer. Additional documents appeared in John Hale's *A Modest Enquiry* (1697) and Robert Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700), which reproduced Mather's *Wonders* and added transcriptions of the indictments for these cases. Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson published several more documents in volume 2 of his *History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay* (1767). All these books included the documents as examples to illustrate points in a narrative and discussion about what happened. The first attempt to present a comprehensive collection of the primary sources did not occur until 1864, when W. Elliot Woodward published all the documents he found in the Essex County Court Archives in his two-volume *Records of Salem Witchcraft*. This edition did not, however, include the records held in other county court archives. In 1938 the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) produced a typescript set of transcriptions specifically of the records of the witchcraft cases that included the records from the Essex County Court Archives already published by Woodward in addition to records in the Boston Public Library, Massachusetts State Archives, New York Public Library, and Peabody Essex Museum. In 1977 Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum published *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, a slightly modernized version of the WPA typescript, adding transcriptions of sixteen manuscripts acquired by the Boston Public Library after the WPA project was completed and a few documents the WPA had overlooked at the Massachusetts State Archives as well as reproducing twenty-four texts that had been included by Mather, Hale, Calef, and Hutchinson.²

The first collection of the legal record of these trials should have been in an official court record book, which would have included the indictments on which the accused came to trial, the names of those on the juries, and the verdicts of the Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692. None is known to exist today. The only possible copy from a record book of the Court of Oyer and Terminer is a brief text included in copies of the records of the trial of Abigail Faulkner Sr. when she petitioned the General Court in 1700 to redress her wrongful conviction. On that petition is the following notation: "Boston Jun 13: 1700 y^e Court orderd y^e Reading of hir tryall."³ Since she was tried by the Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692, this text strongly, though not conclusively, suggests that a no-longer-extant record book existed. The original

² Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, 3 vols. (New York, 1977).

³ Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 875. All documents in the edition are numbered.

record book of the 1693 Superior Court of Judicature had been missing for many years, and historians only knew of it through a nineteenth-century copy until staff located the original while cleaning out a file cabinet in the Suffolk County Courthouse in 1996.

As the number and nature of records in what constituted a definitive collection have grown, the strategy of organizing them by individual cases has remained unchanged. Mather, in treating his cases, presented a small selection of the trial evidence. His stated purpose was to "vindicate the country, as well as the judges and juries," and though the publication contained only five cases, his request to the clerk of the court, his friend Stephen Sewall, was for the records of "half a dozen or, if you please, a dozen, of the principal witches that have been condemned."⁴ Mather's apparent second request for the records, on September 20, 1692, came two days before the final executions on September 22. The people whose cases he included—George Burroughs, Bridget Bishop, Elizabeth How, Martha Carrier, and Susannah Martin—were among those who had already been executed by the time he received the records. Whether Sewall chose which cases to send to Mather or whether Mather selected the cases from what Sewall sent is undeterminable.

When Woodward in 1864 made the first attempt to create a comprehensive edition of all the documents in the Essex County Courthouse, he produced a combined case-by-case and chronological edition, presenting the cases of forty-three people according to the date the arrest warrant was issued for each, followed by a section of sixty-eight pages of miscellaneous documents, including more arrest warrants, examinations, indictments, and some jail bills, in no discernible order. Aside from the fact that some of the dates used in the first section are incorrect, such as the date of John Procter's apprehension, this arrangement is unsatisfactory because it simply does not handle all of the documents in a consistent manner, and it is not apparent why certain documents were placed with one case and not with another. The case against Alice Parker, for example, is almost impossible to find in Woodward's book. Neither the warrant nor the summons for witnesses against Alice Parker and Ann Pudeator mentions Parker in the entry titles or index, though Parker's name comes first in both, and both women were convicted and hanged. The document detailing the physical examination of Alice Parker and five other women is titled and grouped with documents in the case of

⁴ Cotton Mather to William Stoughton, Sept. 2, 1692, in Kenneth Silverman, ed., *Selected Letters of Cotton Mather* (Baton Rouge, La., 1971), 43–44 ("vindicate the country," 44); Mather to Stephen Sewall, Sept. 20, 1692, *ibid.*, 44–45 ("half a dozen," 44). For some details on the discovery of the original record book, see John Ellement, "Misfiled Court Records Date from 17th Century," *Boston Globe*, July 10, 1996, 71.

one of the others (Bridget Bishop). Depositions against her by John Bullock, Samuel Shattuck, and John Westgate are titled and grouped incorrectly as being against Mary Parker.⁵ Woodward introduced the confusion between Alice and Mary Parker; it was carried into the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*. In addition to such problems, Woodward's edition was severely limited in the number of cases it treated.

The WPA made the first attempt to bring all pertinent documents into a coherent, logical format under the supervision of Archie N. Frost, the clerk of the courts, who supervised the WPA transcriptions of all the files of the Essex County Quarterly Courts from 1636 to 1692. The WPA did a remarkably good job of producing a highly valuable typescript edition of the witchcraft cases, though it reproduced many of Woodward's errors. Who the transcribers were is not known, nor is their methodology in checking for accuracy, and their skills seem mixed. Some produced exceptional transcriptions, but others missed words or dropped lines. An incorrect transcription from the Suffolk Court Records, for example, had Tituba's case being brought to a grand jury in "1692" when in fact it was 1693. This mistake was subsequently continued in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* along with many other errors of varying degrees of importance for historians and some with more critical significance for linguists investigating features of the English language in early America.⁶

When Boyer and Nissenbaum published their edition in 1977, *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* performed a huge service to the scholarly community by bringing the valuable work of the WPA, which had languished in typescript, into print. At the same time, they also perpetuated many of the same errors that Woodward and the WPA had produced. Boyer and Nissenbaum corrected many of the most obvious mistakes in the WPA entry titles. How much they actually checked is hard to determine. They acknowledged that their edition was "not perfect" but were confident.

Of course, the result was not perfect. Some documents were mis-labeled, others were included under the wrong cases. (We have corrected most of these obvious errors; a few perhaps remain.) And, in the process of transcribing from handwritten

⁵ W. Elliot Woodward, ed., *Records of Salem Witchcraft, Copied from the Original Documents* (1864–65; repr., New York, 1969). The table of contents for vol. 1 lists John Procter between Martha Cory and "Dorcas" Good, giving a date of "19th March 1691/2," though Procter was not apprehended until the day of his wife's examination on Apr. 11, 1692. For Alice Parker's case, *ibid.*, 2: 13–14, 17.

⁶ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 755; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 844. Tituba was Samuel Parris's slave and one of the first people to be formally accused in February 1692.

originals many of which are—as anyone who has examined them can testify—nearly illegible or almost illiterate, it may well be that some mis-readings crept in. Nevertheless, we are confident, both on the basis of our own work with these documents and our conversations with staff members of the Essex Institute and Essex County officials, that the transcriptions of 1938 were done with scrupulous care, and that the documents published here are, for all practical purposes, accurate verbatim renderings of the originals.⁷

It is hard to fault Boyer and Nissenbaum for not undertaking the complex task of revisiting all the manuscripts, considering that the enormous time and effort were well beyond what they set out to do—publish the work of the WPA—though they might have more rigorously tested their belief in the “accurate verbatim renderings.” *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* reproduced the case-by-case structure used by the WPA, listing 153 cases alphabetically by the name of the accused. These cases are followed by a 185-page section of “Additional Documents, 1692–1750,” arranged in various groups according to their purpose in the legal proceedings during different time spans in roughly chronological order within each group. Much recommends the WPA case-by-case approach. It is convenient, for example, when writing about George Burroughs, executed on August 19, 1692, to be able to pick up volume 1 of *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, look under “B,” and find the case record. That can never be taken away from the organization used in the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, though Boyer and Nissenbaum acknowledged the difficulty presented when turning to documents that reference “two or three or even more accused witches.” For rough use it often works, yet it is not reliable for many aspects of many cases. One such example is found in the first entry in Burroughs’s case on page 151 of the first volume, which is the legal complaint against Burroughs dated April 30, 1692. The complaint is not simply against Burroughs, as Boyer and Nissenbaum inform the reader in the title of the document, but a complaint submitted against five other people: Lydia Dustin, Susannah Martin, Dorcas Hoar, Sarah Morey, and Philip English. Suppose the reader’s interest is in Martin, who was also convicted and hanged. One turns to “M,” finds her, and the case record begins on page 549 with the warrant for her arrest. Finding the complaint mentioned in the warrant becomes a matter of finding it in the index. Clearly, this approach is an improvement over Woodward, especially with the more complete index, but even so, if the reader’s interest is in Hoar this requires going to

⁷ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 32.

Burroughs's case to find this complaint against her, then to English's case to find the warrant for her apprehension, and finally to Martin's case to find a mittimus transferring Hoar to jail in Boston.⁸ In one sense this search is satisfactory because the reader is directed where to look. Editors must place a string of people somewhere in the linear text of a printed book; if an index is good enough, a reader can follow the cross-referencing trail. That reader, however, cannot easily decipher the narrative.

When Deliverance Hobbs was examined in prison, she named Burroughs. This document does not appear in Burroughs's case record in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, nor is there a reference to it from there, yet it is significant. Granted, searching the online version of *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* for "George Burroughs" will make the connection that the print edition cannot, but the value in simply finding the document is limited by the absence of temporal context.⁹ When did she name him? The text of her examination contains no date, and determining the date for it—April 23, 1692—requires reviewing other documents in her case to look for clues about when she entered prison. There is value in supplying access to all the documents that reference an individual. The principle of organizing by individual case has much to offer, yet it still has serious limitations. A chronological presentation, however, reveals this important feature of the beginning of the case against Burroughs.

Additionally, the alphabetical list of cases as presented in previous editions has another issue. How is a case defined? Four cases in the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* appear to be against some of the main accusers: Sarah Bibber, Elizabeth Hubbard, Mercy Lewis, and Abigail Williams. Boyer and Nissenbaum added a fifth to the list, Susannah Shelden. Including these five accusers is misleading because no charges, witchcraft or otherwise, were made against them as there were against confessors Sarah Churchill, Abigail Hobbs, and Mary Warren. The depositions and statements in these sections seem to have been submitted to impeach the accusers' credibility as witnesses in the cases of Rebecca Nurse, Elizabeth Procter, and others but are presented

⁸ Ibid., 1: 33 (quotation). For the complaint against George Burroughs et al., ibid., 1: 151; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 96. The names are listed in the order they appear in the complaint document. For the warrant, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 313–14; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 99. For the mittimus, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 550; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 114. A mittimus is a warrant of commitment to prison also used to empower the sheriff to move prisoners, who were already in jail in Boston, to Salem for their appearance in court.

⁹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 423; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 153. A hypertext revised edition of *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* is available online at <http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/texts/transcripts.html>.

without references to the cases in which they were used. Another supposed case included in the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* is that of John Lee, based on a single four-line scrap of a manuscript that no one can prove had anything to do with any known witchcraft case, except that it had been displayed for many years in a frame with two witchcraft documents in the Essex County Courthouse. And then there is the case of the nonexistent "Jerson Toothaker," a name that first appeared in an entry title in Woodward's edition based on a misinterpretation of two surnames written on the docket of a single document against Mary Ireson and Mary Toothaker. Perpetuation of this mistake also gives the impression that the WPA transcribers may have simply copied some of the content from the Woodward edition without returning to all the manuscripts.¹⁰ There are still too many false starts in this case-by-case organization even if a reader is adept at cross-referencing, be it in a printed book or digital text.

Even less satisfying is that 26 of the remaining 146 valid cases listed in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* consist of a single document and another 35 include only two. Though most of these brief cases include references to other documents pertinent to the case placed elsewhere in the volumes—a vast improvement over the Woodward and WPA compilations, neither of which includes this kind of cross-referencing—the references are incomplete, with entry titles suggesting more than is really included in the case and giving no indication as to what is excluded.

The definition of case even in regard to accused people is also problematic because some accusations came to nothing legally. Does Nehemiah Abbott Jr., who was arrested but released by the local magistrates, really count as a case? Yes, it was an accusation, yet the Court of Oyer and Terminer was never presented with formal charges against him. Calling his story a case suggests a parallel weight to the others that it may not deserve. Counting everyone accused of witchcraft, even in passing, as a case produces numbers that are deceptive because this practice fails to make distinctions about how far the accusations went in the judicial system: not all were pursued by the magistrates. There are a variety of anecdotes about people of higher social standing, such as

¹⁰ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 765 ("Jerson Toothaker"); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 305. Enders A. Robinson picked up this error, discussed in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*. See Robinson, *The Devil Discovered: Salem Witchcraft, 1692* (New York, 1991), 350 n. 285. For the acknowledgment of the inclusion of accusers as cases, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 33. For information about John Lee, *ibid.*, 2: 535; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 978. An appendix in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* will include Lee's evidence and two other documents reproduced in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* that the editors of the forthcoming volume have determined were not connected to the witchcraft trials.

Magistrate Jonathan Corwin's mother-in-law and Hale's and Phips's wives, being accused but never arrested. Do these really count as cases?

The gold standard when counting cases has always been conviction and execution, of which scholars can count nineteen by hanging, plus Giles Cory (who was not convicted of witchcraft yet pressed to death under heavy stones by order of the court when he refused to plead at trial), making twenty. Scholars are more likely to start with them because of their fates. Eleven other people were also wrongfully convicted but not executed. Their names are not as well known, though their petitions years later to reverse the attainders on their names because of those convictions were what initiated the official governmental redress of all the court's actions. Twenty-eight others were tried and found not guilty, yet they still had to settle their jailers' bills before they could be released and were never compensated. How do the stories of these people fit with the stories of the more famous victims? Because Sarah Cloyce was the sister of two of those executed, Rebecca Nurse and Mary Esty, and she was not executed, there is a temptation to tell her story in the context of what happened to her sisters, raising romantic possibilities about her escape. The extant evidence is much more mundane, putting her in the group of people against whom indictments were presented to a grand jury that then rejected them as "ignoramus" (meaning there were not sufficient grounds to proceed to trial).¹¹ The new edition makes it easy to find such information. Others were arrested but formal cases were never even brought to a grand jury, so they languished in jail. This group includes at least fifteen children from five to sixteen years old, six of whom were ten years old or younger.

As also happened in Woodward's edition, the text of many manuscripts in the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* is silently divided into multiple entries, likely with the intent to make the presentation more comprehensible, yet also with the understanding that different sections within individual documents were either about different people or added at a different point in the proceedings, which called for some kind of editorial separation. In *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, for instance, documents that contain the examinations of several people held on the same day are split and the parts put with the appropriate cases, which unfortunately decontextualizes the parts from the whole, eliminating the natural connections inherent in the original manuscripts. In other instances, especially with arrest warrants, the return of the arresting officers is often presented as a separate entry even when the return was written on the same piece of paper as the warrant, though

¹¹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 221–23; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 809–11.

this practice is inconsistent. Other returns are printed with the warrants, which could suggest to the reader that the returns with separate entries are separate objects when in fact they are not.

One assumption of the case-based organizational principle is that scholars can count the people involved in these cases by the entry titles. Nevertheless historians have never agreed on the exact number of cases and point to the number of missing legal records and the lack of an official summary record book of the Court of Oyer and Terminer as an easy explanation. This defense is a red herring with respect to the grand juries and trials. Scholars know how many people were brought to trial and can see the *Jurat in Curia* (meaning sworn in court) notations in Sewall's handwriting, which are similar to Jonathan Elatson's *Jur. In Cur.* on the documents used in the trials before the 1693 Superior Court of Judicature, for which there is a summary record book. One can also identify all the people whose cases were heard or scheduled to be heard by grand juries. Boyer and Nissenbaum state, "of the actual deliberations of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, very few records remain."¹² On the contrary there are copious records of indictments, grand juries hearing cases, and documents used at trial.

Historians can also distinguish between the work performed by county magistrates and the provincial Court of Oyer and Terminer. Local authorities collected evidence and examined the accused, and the Court of Oyer and Terminer handled the grand jury inquests, arraignments, pleas, jury trials, and sentencing. Who was responsible for what work is perhaps blurred because some of the people changed positions when the court was formally commissioned: Corwin, Bartholomew

¹² Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 36 (quotation). For Jonathan Elatson's appointment, see Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 729. For more on the deposition of *Elizabeth Hubbard v. Mary Whittredge*, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 858; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 653. The brief notation of *Jurat in Curia* was in almost all cases added to evidence at trial and not at some other hearing, such as grand jury inquests. This may be exemplified by the handwriting of this notation on the deposition of Elizabeth Hubbard against Mary Whittredge, a case that came before the grand jury in September 1692 but did not come to trial until January 1693. *Jurat in Curia* was written on this document not by Stephen Sewall, the clerk of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, but by Elatson, who was sworn in on Dec. 22, 1692, as the clerk of the Superior Court of Judicature. Among the variety of new texts appearing in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* are pertinent sources of information about the formation of the two courts hearing the witchcraft cases, as contained in entries from the Governor's Council Executive Records in 1692. The number of accused listed or totaled in books published from 1982 to 2002 by historians Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, John Demos, Richard Godbeer, Carol F. Karlson, Mary Beth Norton, Marilynne K. Roach, and Enders A. Robinson ranges from 141 to 188. They have used different criteria to define the accused, in some cases any person named and in other cases only those considered in the judicial system.

Gedney, John Hathorne, and Thomas Wade had all signed warrants and conducted examinations in their roles as local magistrates prior to the court's commission in May 1692, when Gedney and Hathorne became justices of the new court, and Wade, Dudley Bradstreet, Daniel Epps Sr., and John Higginson Jr. were officially appointed as justices of the peace in Essex County. Corwin joined the new court when Nathaniel Saltonstall declined the appointment. Today scholars primarily have evidence in manuscript form that was collected at the local level by magistrates, some of which is admittedly missing, to which oaths and notations by the court were added when the evidence was presented in a superior court.

This process began when the Court of Oyer and Terminer first sat on June 2, 1692, to hear Bridget Bishop's case. Why hers was the only case that went to trial in early June is an important question often asked. Reading the records chronologically as the proceedings unfolded puts in clearer context what the court was doing even if the records do not indicate why she went first. A May 31, 1692, mittimus exists in the handwriting of the Crown's attorney, Thomas Newton, ordering the transfer of nine prisoners to Salem for the first sitting of the Court of Oyer and Terminer. Six women (not including Tituba) were subjected to physical examinations for witch's teats on June 2, suggesting that more prosecutions were planned for early June than actually took place. Boyer and Nissenbaum's conclusion that Bishop was "carefully selected for this first trial" in early June because there was "a particularly damning array of evidence" against her may be based on supposition rather than evidence.¹³ Their conclusion does not allow consideration of the fact that she was not uniquely presented to a court that had other cases in process moving at the same pace as hers. Scholars may or may not decide that this context is significant, but they need to know of the other cases that were concurrently in process by the court before accepting Boyer and Nissenbaum's statement.

The day after Bishop's grand jury and trial, grand juries proceeded to hear evidence supporting eleven separate indictments against Rebecca Nurse and John Willard and returned true bills in at least eight. Though it is still valid to ask why Bishop was first, the question cannot be why she was the only person prosecuted at that time. Hers was not the only case the Court of Oyer and Terminer handled, though she ended up being the only one tried. The more interesting questions to ask about early June are why only two of the other eight transferred from the Boston jail had indictments against them brought to the grand jury at that point, why Nurse and Willard did not go directly to trial after the

¹³ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 19.

grand jury returned true bills against them on June 3, and why nothing was done with the other six until much later.

Teasing out the narrative of each individual caught up in the events beginning in 1692 is complex, yet the *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* edition seeks to achieve that goal. The creation of this new edition has included a comprehensive review of every text, not only for letter-by-letter accuracy in transcription but also to determine the chronological context of each item. The editors of *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* have made the dating of the included texts a priority and have identified some of the men who recorded them. The editors have retranscribed and rigorously reviewed all manuscripts, though they recognize that errors may slip through. Historians will have an accurate record of the events in the order in which they occurred, though inevitably some will disagree with a given chronological decision. A time line of grand jury hearings and trials will allow them to look at a case-by-case form, and scholars will be able to consult a comprehensive index of all the names that appear in the documents. Linguists, too, will have the most accurate rendering of this corpus of early American English.

Early in the process of creating the new edition, it became apparent that the larger the sample of each recorder's handwriting, the more evidence would be available to confirm the accuracy of some of the "nearly illegible" aspects of the manuscripts that Boyer and Nissenbaum acknowledged would be difficult to decipher.¹⁴ It also became obvious that there were many recorders whose handwriting appeared on multiple documents, and if the editors could keep track of which recorder's handwriting was on which document, they could improve the accuracy of all the transcriptions of texts in that handwriting.

With this degree of letter-by-letter review of the handwritten manuscripts, there came a range of subtler corrections within the texts themselves: content words, names of people, and dates that have been included in the traditional transcriptions began to change. Ezekiel Cheever's version of Tituba's examination, for example, always included a claim that Tituba saw "rats," yet a closer examination of his handwriting shows that Cheever's lowercase *c* resembles a modern-day *r*, which is evident in his identical letter form in words such as "children" and "came" (that have always been transcribed correctly). Tituba said she saw "cats," not "rats."¹⁵ What are the implications of such a minor change? It really depends on the nature of a scholar's inquiry, but if a

¹⁴ Ibid., 1: 32.

¹⁵ Ibid., 3: 747–49 ("rats," 3: 748); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 3 ("cats").

folklorist, for example, were examining the familiars in witchcraft lore, the incorrect inclusion of rats would have unintended consequences.

Another record details one “afflicted” girl’s story that a specter visited her, bringing a winding-sheet and, as Woodward had included it, a “cosen,” printed with a long *s*, with an undecipherable meaning. The WPA rendered it as “bafen,” with the archaic long *s* an *f*. In *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, however, the noun became more comprehensible: “basen.” The potential exists for an interpretation of the basin as something used in a devilish baptism, but with careful analysis of the difficult handwriting the word on the stained manuscript has finally been interpreted as something quite different: “kofen” (coffin), which has a more obvious connection to the winding-sheet (Figure I). Another account by one of those claiming affliction includes the observation that John Procter’s specter was sitting in someone’s lap during the hearing. In the traditional transcription, this passage has been rendered as “Majstrats lap,” which suggests a challenge to the judges that the actual claim, that the specter was in the “marshals lap,” may not.¹⁶ Examples of this kind of correction abound in the new transcriptions, including the correct rendering of a significant number of names.

Almost as soon as the editors started collecting information about the recorders, the possibility of using it to establish document dates as well as to furnish patterns of participation by various individuals involved in the trials became apparent. Use of digital images has also allowed for comparison of whole documents held in different archives. In one case it was easy to visually demonstrate that a deposition against Elizabeth Procter held by the Boston Public Library, which seemed to be in Samuel Parris’s handwriting, was actually an exact tracing of a document with an identical text in the Essex Institute Collection at the Peabody Essex Museum.¹⁷

¹⁶ Woodward, *Records of Salem Witchcraft*, 2: 202 (“cosen”); “Mary Warren & Mary Ireson vs. Jerson Toothaker,” in “Salem Witchcraft, compiled and transcribed in 1938 by the Works Progress Administration under the supervision of Archie N. Frost, Clerk of the Courts, Essex County, Massachusetts,” typescript, 3 vols., Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass., vol. 2, unpaginated (“bafen”); Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 765 (“basen”), 2: 677 (“Majstrats lap”); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 305 (“kofen”), no. 61 (“marshals lap”).

¹⁷ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 675–76, is a transcription based on the traced copy from MS Ch K 1.40 vol. 2, p. 500, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library. Compare with Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 52, which is a transcription based on the original manuscript in the Essex Institute Collection, no. 18, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum. The original document that was traced had been on display under glass for years at the Essex County Courthouse alongside the fragment about John Lee mentioned earlier.

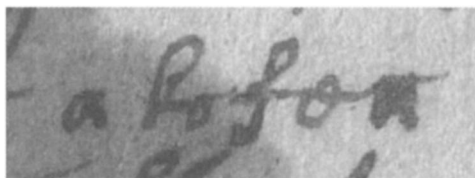


FIGURE I

Detail from the statement of *Mary Warren v. Mary Ireson and Mary Toothaker*, Essex County Court Archives, vol. 2, no. 117, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Judicial Archives, on deposit at the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

Other comparisons have allowed the editors to search for similarities and differences that can reveal chronological associations between documents, allowing for the dating of documents that otherwise have no dating clues in the content of the text. The editors compiled a database of the handwriting of more than two hundred unique recorders found across the nine hundred or so manuscripts transcribed in the new edition, which they could sort by scribe or by distinctive feature. The database kept track of the four classes of features: distinctive orthography, individual letter formation, abbreviation style, and idiosyncratic punctuation. These identifiers worked even in manuscripts where a recorder may have only contributed a few words or lines, offering otherwise unavailable insights into who was actively participating in the legal proceedings, when, in which cases, and on whose behalf.

Parris took down the accounts of the examinations of at least nineteen accused people (a figure based only on the extant manuscripts in his hand). He also wrote a variety of depositions against many of the people considered first for prosecution when the Court of Oyer and Terminer convened in late May 1692, but none after that. His handwriting also appears on matching testimony by his niece, Abigail Williams, against the same set of people. From comparing the documents across archives, this pattern of Parris's participation in and withdrawal from the proceedings becomes clear. Sergeant Thomas Putnam, father of "afflicted" Ann Putnam Jr., recorded 120 depositions on behalf of himself and thirty-eight others in cases against twenty-nine different people, nineteen of whom were convicted and fourteen executed. These depositions by the "afflicted" and their relatives describing the preternatural crimes that led to the examinant's arrest were sometimes mentioned in the accounts of the public examinations of the accused as having been read aloud to the accused so they could answer what was charged against

them during their interrogation.¹⁸ These depositions by so many people are remarkable because they contain specific similarities in the descriptions of the afflictions and the phrasing of the accusations. This similarity seems likely to have been due to the influence of Thomas Putnam, who was the recorder and the one common element across the group of accusers.

When comparing these numerous depositions visually, something else curious becomes apparent: what may appear to be a simple change in ink color in the middle of a single deposition written by Thomas Putnam, a feature that could be attributed to any number of reasons, gains significance when a similar ink change occurs consistently at the beginning of a specific phrase, “also on the [day] day of [month], being the day of [his/her] examination,” referencing spectral afflictions on the date of the public examination of the accused, which was appended to texts that described events and afflictions preceding the examination.¹⁹ Many of these depositions carry a final few lines written by Simon Willard, Andrew Elliot, or a few other recognizable but as yet unidentified recorders specifying the date when the witness swore to the deposition before a jury of inquest. Because most of the bills of indictment presented to the grand juries specified that the crime occurred on the date of the examination of the accused, it may be that Thomas Putnam added these sections to the documents in direct support of the charges specified in the indictments on which the grand jury was to decide. What also became evident is that these records in general were not created one manuscript at a time, each completed in a single sitting by a single writer, but that most were texts coconstructed by two, three, or more people over time and used for multiple purposes on different occasions. The appending of the words *Jurat in Curia* in Sewall’s hand indicates an additional date and use: the document was entered as evidence at the trial of the accused.

Each document in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* has anywhere from one to five chronological markers associated with it. The date of grand jury hearings is often mentioned in the oath that people swore to their previous depositions, allowing the editors to determine when the grand juries sat in whose cases, but indictments presented to the grand juries are typically undated. Very rarely there is a date on one, usually in

¹⁸ For examples see the accounts of the examinations of John Willard (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 823–29; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 173–74) and Martha Cory (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 248–54; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 16).

¹⁹ For examples of the formulaic construction as it appears in context, see the deposition of *Ann Putnam Jr. v. Sarah Good* (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 373–74; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 9), and the deposition of *Mercy Lewis v. John Willard* (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 849–50; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 184).

Sewall's handwriting after a *Jurat* or *Jurat in Curia* notation next to a name on a list of witnesses, apparently indicating that the witness swore to his or her testimony at the trial itself.

The editors have also been able to dovetail this chronological information with the data about the recorders, leading to a high degree of certainty, for instance, that the handwriting of Newton, the first attorney general handling the cases for the Court of Oyer and Terminer, only appears in manuscripts from the end of May, when he was appointed to the position, until late July, when he departed. Anthony Checkley, his successor, was appointed in July. His handwriting does not appear on the indictments against George Burroughs, George Jacobs Sr., Elizabeth Procter, or John Procter, whose cases were brought to the grand jury on August 3 and 4, but it does appear on the indictments against Mary Esty and Martha Cory for their grand juries on August 3 and 4. Being able to isolate the contributions to the witchcraft documents by the two attorneys general offers a clearer picture of the duties of the office.

In some cases there have been only a few or small samples of individual handwriting. Two recorders from the same town, Mary Bradbury's husband, Thomas, and their son-in-law, John True, have strikingly similar handwriting, making it difficult to differentiate between their contributions. The timely appearance of an eBay auction in April 2006 of several signed seventeenth-century documents in the handwriting of both men helped enormously.²⁰

Another aspect of the new transcriptions is the consistent reclamation of text that had been crossed out. In one document the name "Wiluam procter" is crossed out in a list of names. The first name in that list has previously been transcribed as "Wm procter," supporting the plausibility that the second name was deleted because William was included twice by mistake. Previous transcriptions have not included the deletion. Further investigation has revealed that what has been traditionally rendered as "Wm" is actually "beni," a reference to William's brother, Benjamin, revealing that William was not named in this evidence. In other documents the names of some of the accusers are crossed out, including Betty Parris's name deleted as an accuser in a deposition against Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn, and Tituba; Shelden's name removed as one of the "afflicted" in a deposition by Hubbard against Hoar; and the excision of any mention of the afflictions of Ann Putnam Jr., Mary Walcott, and Williams from a deposition by Lewis against Elizabeth

²⁰ "Rare and Important 17thc American Documents Salisbury MA: T. Bradbury Salem Witch Husband, Found in Rare NE Book," eBay auction no. 7025483354, Apr. 22–May 2, 2006, for sale by "merrymagpie."

Procter.²¹ Identifying the actual Procter brother named is clearly beneficial in this kind of reclamation of text, yet the implications of the removal of accusers' names may be significant and certainly warrants further research.

Another correction pertains to the name of Good's four- or five-year-old daughter. Startlingly, Dorcas was not the girl's name. It was Dorothy. An examination of all references to this child by name across all the documents reveals that though Magistrate Hathorne initially recorded her name as "Dorcas Good" on the warrant for her apprehension on March 23, 1692, and the same name was copied farther down the document in the return of the constable when she was arrested on March 24, in every other document that uses her first name she is called Dorothy (Figure II). The singularity of the appearance of "Dorcas" may seem convincing enough, at face value, but two other documents in Hathorne's handwriting, a census of prisoners on May 23 and a mittimus on May 25 that include the girl, show evidence that he corrected her name from Dorcas to Dorothy (Figures III–IV).²² As in many cases, the authorities simply did not know the people brought before them, just as in many cases people making complaints did not know the first names of those against whom they were complaining. Previously, historians only followed Hathorne's initial error.

The meaning and significance of the Salem witch trials will not stand or fall on these discoveries, though they give valuable insight into the judicial meticulousness of the proceedings. When names were not known, as was often the case, they were subsequently filled in. It is revealing that names were not known; either the scholarly impression of the communities as close-knit needs revisiting or some other aspect of the culture needs more investigation. Though *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* demonstrates some examples of people not knowing names, *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* reveals much more fully the extent of this situation as well as the bureaucracy at work in seeking to make

²¹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 688–89 ("Wm," 2: 688); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 502 ("beni"). For more on Betty Parris, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 612–13; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 207. For more on Susannah Sheldon, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 395–96; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 403. For more on Ann Putnam Jr., Mary Walcott, and Abigail Williams, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 670; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 51.

²² For more on the warrant for Dorothy Good's arrest, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 351; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 22. For more on the census and the mittimus, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 873–74, 1: 255; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 216–17.

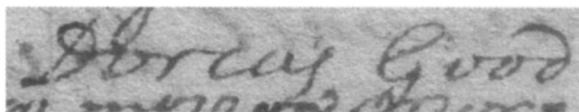


FIGURE II

Detail from the arrest warrant of Dorothy Good, Essex County Court Archives, vol. 1, no. 61, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Judicial Archives, on deposit at the Phillips Library.

proper identifications in a legal system that was anything but haphazard. This judicial system was far from being hysterical.

The judiciary, though not fair by modern standards, was meticulous by the standards of its day. There were two ways a person could be charged with the crime of witchcraft in these proceedings: either for specific malevolent acts using witchcraft to afflict a person or for covenanting with the devil. The best supporting evidence for conviction for the former charge was a statement from two or more “Humane Witnesses” to the same criminal act.²³ Typically, the best supporting evidence for the latter charge was a defendant’s own sworn confession.

Indictments on their face look fairly boring. They were created with a boilerplate fill-in-the-blank form and contain formulaic language that is repeated in each text. When looking at the manuscripts in person and in color digital images, the fill-in-the-blank design of these documents is immediately apparent, often because different ink used to fill in the blanks with the defendant’s name and residence and the particulars of the crime stands out more visibly. The grand jury decided on separate indictments presented to it by the attorney general, charging the accused for each person they allegedly “afflicted” in addition to a charge of covenanting if the accused had confessed during an examination. At that point the grand jury had to decide whether to return a true bill, which led to arraignment and trial, or an *ignoramus*. Indictment boilerplates drawn up in 1692 contain slightly different language from those of 1693, specifically near the end of the document, where the 1692 boilerplate refers to the “forme of the Stattute,” whereas the 1693 boilerplate refers to the “Law.” Some indictments were apparently drawn up in 1692 but not presented to a grand jury until 1693 and have the words “forme of the Stattute” crossed out and “Law” written in.²⁴ This difference helps determine when these undated documents were initially prepared.

²³ [Samuel Willard], *Some Miscellany Observations On our present Debates Respecting Witchcrafts, in a Dialogue Between S[alem] and B[oston]* (Philadelphia, 1692), 6.

²⁴ For an example of the 1692 boilerplate, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 87–88; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no.

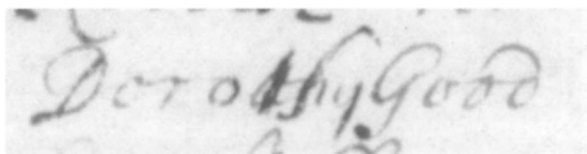


FIGURE III

Detail from a census of prisoners, Essex County Court Archives, vol. 2, no. 134, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Judicial Archives, on deposit at the Phillips Library.

Newton, as attorney general, filled in the indictments against John Willard and Nurse on June 3, 1692. The ink Newton used has, over the years, turned bright orange. This same ink is also seen dotting many of the i's and capitalizing a T in the boilerplate form, giving scholars additional insight into the meticulousness of his practice.

When a person was arrested in June, July, and August, he or she was examined, and once the Court of Oyer and Terminer was convened and a grand jury returned a true bill on the indictment, the person was usually tried swiftly, sometimes on the same day as the true bill. In September, however, the number of cases being handled by the court multiplied, and though the court's precedents generally continued, deviation in the pattern of addressing some cases occurred. Public examinations by local officials and grand juries and trials before the Court of Oyer and Terminer of numerous people were all being conducted concurrently, which means that following the chronology of events is more challenging, complicated by the number of legal records that are apparently no longer extant.

The first of two grand juries in September was seated early in the month, September 6–10. Based on dates of sworn testimony, this grand jury appears to have met on the cases of Mary Bradbury, Giles Cory, Abigail Hobbs, Rebecca Jacobs, Alice Parker, William Procter, and Pudeator. The presence of the same handwriting in the notation of “bila uera” and “bil a uera” on the reverse of the indictments confirms this group; the notation differs from the notation of “Billa vera” (variant spellings of *billa vera*, all meaning true bill) on the indictments of the cases heard by the second seating of the grand jury, during the week of September 13–17, that decided on the indictments against Sarah Buckley,

273. For an example of the 1693 boilerplate, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 77; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 748. For an example of an update made to a boilerplate, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 315; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 791.

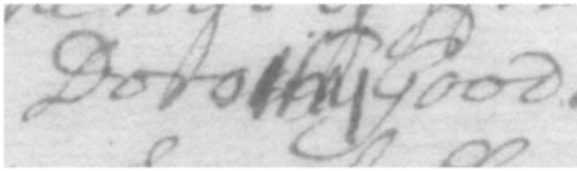


FIGURE IV

Detail from a mittimus, Essex County Court Archives, vol. 1, no. 36, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Judicial Archives, on deposit at the Phillips Library.

Rebecca Eames, Abigail Faulkner Sr., Ann Foster, Margaret Jacobs, Mary Lacey Sr., Mary Parker, Wilmot Redd, Samuel Wardwell, and Mary Whittredge.²⁵ All these people had to face the charges in court, some before the Court of Oyer and Terminer that month and others before the Superior Court of Judicature the following January.

The pleas as well as the grand jury decisions were written in Latin: the notation of “Ponet Se,” short for *Ponit Se Super Patriam* (he puts himself before the country), indicated that the accused entered a plea of not guilty and agreed to be tried by jury. The notation of a plea of *Cognovit* (acknowledging the charge) was a formal confession of guilt to the charges in the indictment, and the defendant would go directly to the sentencing phase of the proceedings.²⁶ Four women pled guilty in September: Rebecca Eames; Ann Foster; her daughter, Mary Lacey Sr.; and Abigail Hobbs, but they were not executed with the others who were convicted at trial in September, which likely caused much of the discord and the dissolution of the court soon thereafter.

By comparing the handwriting of just these few Latin words on the backs of the indictments, the editors have been able to discern patterns that reveal more about the time line of cases against various people such as Cloyce, William Procter, and Job Tookey, though there is no testimony

²⁵ For examples of *billa vera* notations on indictments, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 414 (“bil a Vera”), 1: 146 (“Billa Vera”); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 607 (“bila uera”), 618 (“Billa vera”).

²⁶ For an example of a “Ponet Se” notation on an indictment, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 291; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 460. For an example of a *Cognovit* notation on an indictment, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 414; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 607. For an example of a *Cognovit* notation missing from an earlier transcription, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 414–15; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 606.

dated as sworn to any grand jury for any of them. These three are not as well known today as some of their relatives who had been condemned and hanged during the summer.

William Procter, a son of Elizabeth and John Procter, offers a useful example for the way in which the edition tracks a case. William was first complained against on May 28, 1692, with ten other people from nearly as many towns across Essex, Middlesex, and Suffolk counties. Joseph Holton and John Walcott, who filed the complaint, knew the first names of only four of the eleven people they accused of afflicting Lewis, Ann Putnam Jr., Mary Walcott, and Williams, though a separate document, in the handwriting of Thomas Putnam and Hathorne, contains a list of exactly who was supposed to have “afflicted” whom. Five of the people named in the complaint are noted on the bottom of the complaint, including William. Warrants were issued that day by Hathorne and Corwin for the apprehension of William, Martha Carrier of Andover, How of Topsfield, Redd of Marblehead, and Sarah Rice of Reading, instructing the various constables to bring the accused to Nathaniel Ingersoll’s tavern in Salem Village for examination on May 31. A warrant for another person named in the complaint, John Alden of Boston, was issued on May 31, bringing the total number of people examined that day to six.²⁷ All these warrants specified Mary Walcott as one of those “afflicted,” and the warrant for William alleged that he had also “afflicted” Susannah Sheldon. Accounts exist of the examinations of Carrier, How, and Redd, all of whom were convicted and executed, but the account of William’s first examination on that day does not.

Three indictments against William survive, all of which were returned ignoramus by the grand jury, but the handwriting indicates that grand juries from two different courts heard charges against him. The later indictment drawn up against him for allegedly afflicting Mary Walcott during his examination on September 17, 1692, was returned “IgnoRamus” by a grand jury that is easily identified as being the first grand jury of the Superior Court of Judicature in January 1693. The docket is endorsed by Robert Payne, the foreman of other January grand juries. The examination from September is notated as having been sworn to by William Murray, the recorder of the examination, and was attested to by Justice of the Peace Higginson on January 7, 1693. The boilerplate form of this indictment itself confirms this dating, the handwriting and language used in the template being identical to those in other indictments known to have been created in 1693. The earlier two

²⁷ For more on the list, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 871–72; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 222. For more on the warrant, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 695; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 226.

indictments against William—those for afflicting Hubbard and Warren on May 31, 1692, the day he was initially examined (curiously, not the same two girls he was arrested for allegedly afflicting)—are somewhat more difficult to date. On September 8, 1692, Hubbard swore to her evidence against William before a grand jury for the Court of Oyer and Terminer, indicating that a grand jury was hearing his case then. The handwriting and language used in the boilerplates of both these other indictments match thirty-five other indictments in the cases of twenty-two others, as does the handwriting of the unknown recorder of the grand jury's finding of "Igno Rama" on the dockets. Whether he was released when the grand jury failed to indict him in September is not known, but he was apparently accused again and reexamined on September 17, and the whole process started over for him.²⁸ Indictments in both years notwithstanding, he never went to trial.

One area of speculation by researchers has been why Cloyce never came to trial. The best clues are found by examining what happened during the grand jury inquest. Witnesses were called on September 5, 1692, to a grand jury regarding the charges against her for afflicting Mary Walcott and Williams at her examination on April 11, 1692. Some of those summoned included her sister-in-law, Mary Towne, and four of her children. They failed to show up, tendering the excuse that they were too ill to travel to court. The three indictments drawn up against Cloyce, including the one charging her with afflicting one of her nieces on September 9, a date when the grand jury was seated (two days after the girl failed to show up), all appear to have been created at the same time, with boilerplates all written in the same handwriting and filled in by then-Attorney General Checkley.²⁹ Still, no grand jury made a decision in September: the grand jury that officially rejected all three extant indictments against Cloyce as ignoramus was the one convened in January 1693 with Payne as foreman. Further evidence that the indictments were not addressed until 1693 is that one of them has some of the boilerplate language from 1692 crossed out and corrected to match the different boilerplate language of 1693.

²⁸ For the ignoramus notations on William Procter's indictments, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 697–98 ("Ignoramus," 2: 698), 695–97 ("IgnoRamus," 2: 696–97); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 776 ("Ignoramus"), 581–82 ("Igno Rama"). On the September examination, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 698–99; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 663.

²⁹ On the summons of witnesses for Sarah Cloyce's inquest, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 257–58; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 549. For the excuse, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 292; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 576. On the three indictments, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 222–23; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 809.

Regarding the first five cases that were tried in January 1693 by the Superior Court of Judicature, those of Rebecca Jacobs, Margaret Jacobs, Buckley, Whittredge, and Tookey, the handwriting on the indictments indicates they were not connected to Payne's January grand jury. The hand of the recorder of the words *billa vera* and *ignoramus* on the extant indictments matches the handwriting found on the indictments that the editors know were addressed by the second September grand jury (September 13–17). No other evidence has ever been available to determine a likely date for Tookey's grand jury hearing.

When the Court of Oyer and Terminer was dismissed in the fall, everything was apparently put on hold. Four people who had pled guilty to a capital crime had not been executed, five people who stood indicted had not been arraigned or tried, and at least three were still being held and charges pursued against them even after a grand jury had failed to return a *billa vera* on any of the original charges against them, all in addition to the many people who were waiting in jail for the court to initiate proceedings against them.

No doubt scholars could have reached some of the conclusions in these previous discussions, some with great difficulty, using one of the previous editions. They could not have reached others, especially those addressing chronology, assessing the roles of the recorders of documents, and clarifying which grand jury was hearing which case. Individual readers will decide whether the organizational principles behind *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* and the execution of those principles are more useful than those of past editions. There is no doubt the editors have raised matters in the new edition that simply have not been addressed before. Previously unpublished manuscripts will appear in print for the first time and important previously published documents, such as Giles Cory's examination, omitted in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, will be part of a comprehensive collection of the legal records. The edition will identify recorders' handwriting systematically and the presumably missing documents used at trial will be visible to all. Not everything will be news to all scholars, but a lot will be news to most.